

A Message from the District Attorney

The Internet can be a great place to visit. It lets you keep in touch with friends and family and provides an enormous amount of information and educational material.



Millions of people go online everyday and are safe. However, the Internet also has its dangers. You can put yourself in physical danger, give up your privacy, and put yourself and your family at financial risk.

As Norfolk District Attorney, I want to make sure that you know about the types of crimes that are being committed on the Internet, and what to do if you feel you may be a victim of Internet crime.

William R. Keating



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
William R. Keating
Norfolk District Attorney

45 Shawmut Road
Canton, MA 02021
(781) 830-4800
www.norfolkda.com

Sex, Drugs and the Internet

What you need to know to protect
yourself against online crime

Types of Crimes:

Sexual Exploitation of Children: Potential dangers lurk in chat rooms. Adult pedophiles pose as children, establish online relationships with other children, and later make contact for the purpose of engaging in criminal sexual activities. One in five youths received a sexual approach or solicitation over the Internet in the past year.¹

Fraud: Con artists advertise valuable products on the Internet, ask for your money up front — and never deliver. Criminals also obtain personal identifying information (name, address and date of birth) and use it to obtain credit in your name.

Illegal Drugs: Your teenager can have direct contact with drug dealers in chat rooms. They can also use the Internet to find recipes and buy ingredients to make homemade “club drugs”. These drugs have been increasingly involved in “date rapes”, overdoses, and fatalities.



Cyberstalking: Cyberstalkers use the Internet to stalk or harass another person. Anonymity puts them in an advantageous position. They could be anywhere — in another country, another state, or in the room next door.

Hacking: Hackers break into a computer, gain control of the Internet Service Provider (ISP) and capture all of the personal information maintained on its subscribers.



WARNING...CYBERCRIMES



Risks for Children:

In addition to sexual exploitation, other risks for children include:

- ❏ Children may be exposed to inappropriate material.
- ❏ Children may encounter demeaning or belligerent messages in chat rooms or bulletin boards.
- ❏ Children may do something on the Internet which has legal or financial consequences. For example, they may give out a parent's credit card number or violate another person's rights without even knowing it.



Millions of dollars are lost to computer crimes each year.

How You Can Reduce the Risks:

- ❏ Don't believe everything you read. An "offer too good to be true" probably is.
- ❏ Remember that people online may not be who they say they are. A 14 year-old girl could really be a 55 year-old man.
- ❏ Never give out identifying information such as your name, age, address or school in a public message.
- ❏ Never arrange a face-to-face meeting with another computer user whom you do not know.
- ❏ Do not respond to messages that are threatening, hateful, or simply make you feel uncomfortable.
- ❏ Get to know the Internet and the services your child is using...spend time with them online.
- ❏ Keep your computer in a common area like the family room so it is easy to see what your child is doing.
- ❏ Set reasonable rules or consider signing an Internet Agreement with your child regarding what you will and will not let them do online.
- ❏ Check out blocking or filtering software.

But remember: nothing beats education and parental participation when it comes to keeping kids safe online.

Laws Relating to Crime on the Internet:

The following are some of the important laws regarding crimes on the Internet:

- ❏ It is against the law to send a message over the Internet that clearly expresses an intention or threat to commit an unlawful act against another person.
- ❏ It is against the law to knowingly access a computer system without authorization. Failure to terminate unauthorized access, obtained by any means, is also against the law.
- ❏ Harassment over the Internet is against the law. You may have evidence of criminal harassment if someone E-mails you repeatedly against your wishes, and causes you to suffer substantial emotional distress.
- ❏ Stalking over the Internet occurs when someone not only harasses you, but also threatens to place you in imminent fear of death or bodily harm. Stalking is a more serious crime than harassment and carries a steeper punishment if convicted.



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What to Do if You Feel You Are a Victim of Internet Crime:

Local Police Department: If you suspect you are a victim of Internet crime, **call your local police department immediately.** Internet servers may destroy information vital to the crime within hours, making the crime hard to prosecute. If necessary, your local police department can contact other agencies (including the Norfolk District Attorney's Office) during non-business hours.

Norfolk District Attorney's Office: You may also call the Norfolk District Attorney's Office at **781-830-4800.**

Internet Service Provider: If you receive a message that is belligerent or threatening, you should call your Internet service provider and ask them to investigate where it came from.

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's CyberTipline: **1-800-843-5678.** This organization handles leads from individuals reporting sexual exploitation of children, including the online enticement of children for sexual acts.

Footnotes:

¹U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office for Victims of Crime, December 2001, *Internet Crimes Against Children*.

**For TTY/TDD users call Massachusetts Relay Service
TTY/TDD: 1-800-439-2370 / Voice: 1-800-439-0183**